United Nations A/C.2/66/4

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 October 2011
English
Original: Arabic

Sixty-sixth session
Second Committee
Agenda item 17 (a)
Macroeconomic policy questions: international trade and development

Identical letters dated 17 October 2011 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

The United States of America has imposed a series of unilateral economic, trade and financial sanctions. The first of those sanctions were imposed by the previous President of the United States in 2003 under the so-called Syria Accountability Act. Regrettably, those unilateral sanctions and measures are still in place. The United States recently imposed a number of sanctions that directly target the economic, financial and banking sectors in the Syrian Arab Republic. Among the most significant of those sanctions were the prohibition on conducting business with or investing in the Syrian petroleum sector and the prohibition or restriction of activities with the Syrian Arab Republic in the commercial, financial banking, information technology, communications and investment sectors.

The sanctions imposed by the United States against the Syrian Arab Republic are illegal because they violate the provisions of the Charter. The United Nations, acting through its bodies and specialized agencies, set out to highlight the danger of those sanctions and their negative effect on the Syrian economy and the foreign trade of the Syrian Arab Republic. For example, the report of the Secretary-General issued as document A/66/138 notes that, according to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the banning of exports of United States products to the Syrian Arab Republic places a trade and development burden on the country. A range of goods and services needed for development purposes have either become unavailable or restricted owing to the higher price the consumer must pay for them from non-American sources. This impacts both local industries and consumers. Local industries are unable to access technologically rich goods and services that may lead to higher efficiency in output while consumers are also unable to enjoy American-made products that may be of better quality compared to the available alternatives.

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In addition to the above-mentioned sanctions imposed by the United States, the States of the European Union, the Syrian Arab Republic's largest trading partner, imposed a series of unilateral sanctions against the Syrian Arab Republic, the latest of which was announced by the Council of the European Union on 23 September 2011 prohibiting investment in the Syrian petroleum sector. The Council also prohibited European investment in Syrian companies, whether inside or outside of Syria, engaged in the exploration, production or refining of crude oil; the granting of any financial loan or the creation of new joint ventures with those companies; and the supply of Syrian denominated banknotes printed in European Union States to the Syrian Arab Republic. The aforementioned sanctions supplement the sanctions the European Union had imposed on 2 September 2011 prohibiting the import of Syrian oil.

Canada recently imposed unilateral sanctions against the Syrian petroleum sector similar to those that were imposed by the United States and the States of the European Union. Australia has also prohibited the export of certain Australian goods to Syria.

In accordance with the Charter and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, the Syrian Arab Republic considers that unilateral economic sanctions, such as those imposed by the United States, the European Union and other States, are a means of political and economic coercion against Syria, and that they are aimed at affecting Syria's ability to take political decisions independently.

The Syrian Arab Republic would also like to highlight the negative effect that such illegal unilateral sanctions have on the world's peoples, in particular those in the developing world. It considers them to be an instrument of Western domination aimed at provoking anti-Western sentiment: most such measures have been and continue to be imposed by Western States, in particular the United States and the European States, in order to weaken the Governments of the States Members of the United Nations or bring pressure to bear on them in order to compel them to take certain actions or change their policies. Those facts are all confirmed by the ESCWA report contained in the report of the Secretary-General issued as document A/66/138.

That so many States had voted in favour of successive General Assembly resolutions calling on the United States to end its economic, commercial and financial embargo of Cuba clearly demonstrates the international community's rejection of the imposition of unilateral economic measures by any Member State against another State. General Assembly resolution 65/6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", was adopted by a vote of 187 to 2. The two States that voted against the resolution were the United States and Israel, both of which have in common the imposition of the same type of sanctions, the former against Cuba and the latter against the Gaza Strip in occupied Palestine. The result of the voting on the resolution concerning the ending of the embargo against Cuba underscores that, by voting against that resolution, Israel clearly supports the policy of imposing illegal unilateral economic sanctions against developing States. This is a policy that, in fact, Israel continues to practice by imposing a complete blockade against the Gaza Strip in occupied Palestine and by depriving the Palestinian people, in particular the residents of the Gaza Strip, of the necessities of a decent living and development. This is confirmed by the report of ESCWA that is annexed to the

report of the Secretary-General issued as document A/66/138. In its report, the Commission indicates that the most severe case of unilateral sanctions is the blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip. This blockade not only violates the principles of international law that are relevant to international trade, but it also violates other aspects of the Fourth Geneva Convention, namely article 33, which prohibits collective punishment.

It is clear from the way the international community rejects the embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States and the embargo that Israel has imposed on the Gaza Strip that the Syrian Arab Republic is joined by the overwhelming majority of States Members in considering that the maintenance by certain United Nations States Members of coercive unilateral economic measures against developing countries constitutes a violation of international law and the rules of international trade and has a particularly deleterious impact on the economies and development efforts of developing countries and the living standards and well-being of their peoples. The imposition of those coercive unilateral measures also affects the vital economic sectors of the countries involved, including the financial, economic, investment, tourism and services sectors. A further impact is on international economic cooperation and on global efforts to move towards an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system. Those facts were underlined by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in its summary of the latest developments it had observed in the trade of the countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic, that are currently affected by unilateral economic sanctions, when it noted that the major impact of the coercive measures applied to the countries is felt in loss of trade and foreign exchange earnings and reduction in production capacity and employment, while the economic and social welfare of citizens in the targeted countries, particularly those in the middle- and low-income groups, is also affected.

The sanctions that are imposed on developing countries by certain States Members, including the most recent sanctions imposed by Europe and the United States on the Syrian Arab Republic, represent the pursuit by those countries of a series of policies on collective punishment, which is internationally outlawed. Those policies, which are pursued on the pretext of protecting human rights, constitute a flagrant violation of the principles of international law and demolish the principle of the sovereign equality of all States and the rules of international trade. They also constitute a violation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, the most recent of which was 65/6, and of resolution 64/189, which urges the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries that are not authorized by relevant organs of the United Nations or are inconsistent with the principles of international law as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and that contravene the basic principles of the multilateral trading system, and calls upon the international community to condemn and reject the imposition of the use of such measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Those measures are, furthermore, incompatible with General Assembly resolution 62/183, which provides that no State may use or encourage the use of unilateral economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights. General Assembly resolution 65/217, entitled "Human rights and unilateral coercive measures", states that unilateral coercive measures create obstacles to trade relations among States, thus impeding the full realization of the rights set forth in the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the right of individuals and peoples to development.

The strategies and policies of the Syrian Arab Republic are based on full respect for human rights and the desire for the development and well-being of its population. Syria adheres to its national principles and legitimate rights as well as to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and, in particular, the principles of respect for the sovereignty of States and non-intervention in their internal affairs. The Government of Syria has accorded the utmost importance to the realization of the reforms that were recently announced, which it is determined to carry out. Those reforms are intended to achieve development in all its forms and ensure the security, peace and welfare of Syrian citizens. If those aims are to be achieved, Syria needs the support of all States for the proposed reforms and their cooperation and coordination, on the basis of the principles of respect for the right to sovereignty, the legitimate interests of States, and non-intervention in internal affairs. Diktats, threats and sanctions are not constructive. The Syrian Arab Republic further requests the international community and United Nations bodies to underline the need for the States which impose coercive unilateral economic measures on developing countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic, to halt such measures forthwith, as well as their inflammatory campaigns to provoke other States to impose such measures, which violate the principles of international legitimacy and have a negative impact on the future of developing countries and their populations. Finally, the Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the United Nations Secretary-General, as one of the responsibilities assigned to him by the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, to raise in all international gatherings and meetings and, in particular, meetings of the Group of Twenty (G-20) and of the Group of Eight Industrialized Countries (G8), the issue of the illegitimacy of the unilateral economic measures which certain Member States impose on other countries for the purpose of political coercion.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations

United Nations A/C.2/66/5

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 November 2011
English
Original: Spanish

Sixty-sixth session
Second Committee
Agenda item 19 (g)
Sustainable development: Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-sixth session

Letter dated 6 October 2011 from the President of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to invite you to consider decision 26/1 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on international environmental governance, adopted at its twenty-sixth session, as well as its decision 25/4 and its decision SS.XI/1 establishing the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-level Representatives on International Environmental Governance. The document entitled "Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome" on the work of the Consultative Group was submitted to the Governing Council at its twenty-sixth session.

In paragraph 3 of decision 26/1, the Governing Council "invites the President of the Governing Council to transmit the Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at its second session and to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session". In response to that invitation, I hereby transmit the document entitled "Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome" to the General Assembly for its consideration and examination. With regard to the other request contained in that same paragraph, I am pleased to inform you that that document was transmitted to the Preparatory Committee for its consideration at its second session in March 2011.

I am also pleased to inform you that, in accordance with paragraph 5 of that decision, the secretariat of the Preparatory Committee has assigned the requested analysis to an outside consultant.

Lastly, I have the honour to inform you that, pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 6 of that decision, an informal meeting was held on 3 June 2011 for Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York.

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As President of the UNEP Governing Council, I wish to express to you my sincere gratitude for the support you provided in that regard and my intention to continue cooperation on the reform of the international environmental governance system.

(*Signed*) Rosa **Aguilar Rivero**

Annex to the letter dated 6 October 2011 from the President of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme to the President of the General Assembly

Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome*

(23 November 2010)

Origins and mandate of the Consultative Group

1. The Consultative Group of Ministers or High-level Representatives on International Environmental Governance (the Consultative Group) was established by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme in its decision SS.XI/1 of 26 February 2010.

2. Decision SS.XI/1 builds upon the work of an earlier consultative group of ministers and high-level representatives established by the Governing Council in its decision 25/4 of 20 February 2009. The work of that group, which has come to be known as the "Belgrade Process" in reference to the site of its first meeting, resulted in the identification of some objectives and functions of an international environmental governance system and the elaboration of a "set of options for improving international environmental governance", which were presented to the Governing Council at its eleventh special session.

3. Decision SS.XI/1 requested the Consultative Group "to consider the broader reform of the international environmental governance system, building on the set of options developed during the Belgrade Process, but remaining open to new ideas". It also requested the Group to conclude its work in a timely fashion and to present a final report to the Governing Council at its twenty-sixth session, in anticipation of the Council's contribution to the second meeting of the open-ended preparatory committee of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

4. The decision requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in his capacity as Chair of the Environment Management Group, "to invite the United Nations system to provide input to the group", and requested the consultative group, through the UNEP secretariat, "to seek relevant inputs from civil society groups from each region".

Work and outcome of the Consultative Group

5. The Consultative Group met in Nairobi from 7 to 9 July 2010 and in Espoo, Finland, from 21 to 23 November 2010. Representatives of 58 countries attended the Nairobi meeting and those of 44 countries attended the Espoo meeting. Inputs from civil society were provided to the process through the UNEP secretariat and inputs from the United Nations system through the Environment Management Group.

6. The President of the Republic of Finland, Tarja Halonen, who is also a co-Chair of the High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability, opened the meeting. She welcomed the work of the Consultative Group, saying that the Panel would be listening to the signals that it sent.

* Previously circulated under the symbol UNEP/GC.26/18.

Strengthening the international environmental governance system: functions and system-wide responses

7. Having considered the objectives and functions of an international environmental governance system identified during the Belgrade Process, and after reviewing gaps and options discussed in the co-Chairs' document on the elaboration of ideas for broader reform of international environmental governance reform (UNEP/CGIEG.2/2/2), the Consultative Group identified a number of potential system-wide responses to the challenges in the current system of international environmental governance, including:

(a) To strengthen the science-policy interface with the full and meaningful participation of developing countries; to meet the science-policy capacity needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, including improvement of scientific research and development at the national level; and to build on existing international environmental assessments, scientific panels and information networks. The overall purpose would be to facilitate cooperation in the collection, management, analysis, use and exchange of environmental information, the further development of internationally agreed indicators, including through financial support and capacity-building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, early warning, alert services, assessments, the preparation of science-based advice and the development of policy options. In this context, the Global Environment Outlook process must be strengthened and work in cooperation and coordination with existing platforms;

(b) To develop a system-wide strategy for environment in the United Nations system to increase the effectiveness, the efficiency and the coherence of the United Nations system and in that way contribute to strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development. The strategy should increase inter-agency cooperation and clarify the division of labour within the United Nations system. It should be developed through an inclusive process involving Governments and seeking input from civil society;

(c) To encourage synergies between compatible multilateral environmental agreements and to identify guiding elements for realizing such synergies while respecting the autonomy of the conferences of the parties. Such synergies should promote the joint delivery of common multilateral environmental agreement services with the aim of making them more efficient and cost-effective. They should be based on lessons learned and remain flexible and adaptive to the specific needs of multilateral environmental agreements. They should aim at reducing the administrative costs of secretariats to free up resources for the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements at the national level, including through capacity-building;

(d) To create a stronger link between global environmental policymaking and financing aimed at widening and deepening the funding base for environment with the goal of securing sufficient, predictable and coherent funding and increasing accessibility, cooperation and coherence among financing mechanisms and funds for the environment, with the aim of helping to meet the need for new and additional funding to bridge the policy-implementation gap through new revenue streams for implementation. Enhanced linkage between policy and financing is needed along with stronger and more predictable contributions and partnerships with major donors and the pooling of public and supplementary private revenue streams. To

consider the development of financial tracking systems, including their costs and benefits, based on existing systems to track financial flows and volumes comprehensively at the international and regional levels, as well as a strategy for greater involvement of private sector financing;

(e) To develop a system-wide capacity-building framework for the environment to ensure a responsive and cohesive approach to meeting country needs, taking into account the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building. The framework should be targeted at strengthening national capacities required to implement multilateral environment agreements and agreed international environmental objectives;

(f) To continue to strengthen strategic engagement at the regional level by further increasing the capacity of UNEP regional offices to be more responsive to country environmental needs. The aim of such strengthening should be to increase country responsiveness and implementation. Environmental expertise within United Nations country teams should be strengthened, including through UNEP.

8. The Consultative Group suggests that the Governing Council at its twenty-sixth session give consideration to the contribution of UNEP to identifying the implementation of, and actors responsible for, follow-up on the functions and system-wide responses.

Form-related aspects of broader institutional reform

9. Having identified the potential system-wide responses above, the Consultative Group considered institutional forms that would best serve to implement those responses and achieve the objectives and functions identified during the Belgrade Process.

10. It was generally accepted that form should follow function and that UNEP should be strengthened and enhanced. Differing views were expressed in respect of institutional reform.

11. Strengthening the global authoritative voice, as well as other voices, for the environment is a key outcome of the international environmental governance reform process, providing credible, coherent and effective leadership for environmental sustainability under the overall framework of sustainable development. During the Belgrade Process and in the co-Chairs' document on the elaboration of ideas for broader reform of international environmental governance (UNEP/CGIEG.2/2/2), various options for broader institutional reforms were put forward, including the following five options:

(a) Enhancing UNEP;

(b) Establishing a new umbrella organization for sustainable development;

(c) Establishing a specialized agency such as a world environment organization;

(d) Reforming the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development;

(e) Enhancing institutional reforms and streamlining existing structures.

12. The Consultative Group recognized the need to develop all the options further and suggested that options (b) and (d) would best be addressed in the wider sustainable development context.

13. Based on the principle that form follows function, and recognizing that it had not achieved consensus on institutional form, the Group suggested that existing institutions be strengthened and enhanced and that options (a) (enhancing UNEP), (c) (establishing a specialized agency such as a world environment organization) and (e) (enhancing institutional reforms and streamlining existing structures) were potential options for strengthening the form of the environment pillar in the context of sustainable development and achieving effective international environmental governance.

Next steps

14. The Consultative Group hereby presents its final report to the Governing Council, in accordance with paragraph 10 of decision SS.XI/1.

15. The Consultative Group is of the view that the Governing Council should further consider how to secure political momentum and efficient follow-up of the international environmental governance process.

16. The Consultative Group expresses its sincere thanks to the Governments of Kenya and Finland, and notes that it was honoured by the presence of Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland at the opening of its second meeting.

United Nations A/C.2/66/6

General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 November 2011

Original: English

Sixty-sixth session
Second Committee
Agenda item 19
Sustainable development

Letter dated 9 November 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Summary of the follow-up seminar to General Assembly resolution 65/149, entitled "Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 19.

(*Signed*) Dalius **Čekuolis**

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Annex to the letter dated 9 November 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Summary of the follow-up seminar to General Assembly resolution 65/149, entitled "Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea" (Vilnius, 20 September 2011)

1. The International Seminar on Environmental Effects Related to Waste Originating from Sea-dumped Chemical Munitions, held in Vilnius on 20 September 2011, gathered together representatives and experts from 23 States, including European countries, the United States of America, Canada and Japan, as well as from the Helsinki Commission, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, academic and research institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector (for more information see www.seadumpedcw.org).

2. The participants discussed environmental, safety and security challenges and effects posed by waste originating from sea-dumped chemical munitions in various parts of the world (the eastern and western coasts of the continental United States and near Hawaii, the eastern coast of Canada, Vieques Island of Puerto Rico, the Adriatic Sea off the coast of Italy and the Baltic Sea), as well as national and international responses to them.

3. The work by the Helsinki Commission and the OSPAR Commission was emphasized as an example of very good regional cooperation that could be used in the setting of guidelines for other regions. All participants agreed that using regional examples as a background, and namely the cases of the North-East Atlantic and the Baltic, could serve as a good example of regional cooperation, both to assess the situation and develop control and management measures.

4. It was also noted that not only regional organizations but also industries as such should become important actors in awareness-raising, both by offering more sound technical solutions for the problem, assessing impact and surveying potential effects, disclosing information on observed cases of waste originating from sea-dumped chemical munitions and also during the construction work by monitoring the potential impact on the marine environment in relation to performed clearing activities of waste originating from sea-dumped chemical munitions. Therefore, it was emphasized that a mechanism for reporting of observed cases by stakeholders other than fishermen should be developed.

5. The participants highlighted that although some remediation activity might be feasible during underwater economic activities conducted by industries, the wholesale remediation of waste originating from sea-dumped chemical munitions worldwide remained unlikely due to financial, political and technical constraints.

6. All participants reaffirmed the importance of General Assembly resolution 65/149, underlining the need for more coordination of relevant activities, further cooperation in sharing information on a voluntary basis and raising awareness on this subject. It was also emphasized that creating a central point for collecting information regarding waste originating from sea-dumped chemical munitions,

environmental aspects, long-term behaviour, potential effects (as well as technical aspects of recovery and destruction) was recommended and essential. The importance of submitting the views of Member States and relevant regional and international organizations on issues relating to the environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea, as well as on possible modalities for international cooperation to assess and increase awareness of this issue to the Secretary-General, was also underlined. Such views will be communicated to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session for further consideration.

7. The seminar proved to be an excellent opportunity for the exchange of relevant information. The importance of further intensified cooperation among States, relevant international and non-governmental organizations and the private sector with regard to waste originating from sea-dumped chemical munitions was recognized.